

Floor Statement of Rep. Henry A. Waxman
Ranking Member, Committee on Energy and Commerce
Friday, February 15th
H.R. 273

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong opposition to this latest attack on federal workers.

H.R. 273 is not a responsible approach to deficit reduction.

Federal employees have already been asked to make significant sacrifices to help reduce our debt. So far, they have contributed \$103 billion toward deficit reduction through pay freezes and changes to retirement benefits. And, we have yet to take into account the prospect of furloughs and layoffs should the ill-advised, across the board cuts mandated by the Budget Control Act take effect in March.

H.R. 273 would freeze federal employees' salaries for the third consecutive year, forcing federal workers to forego an additional \$15 billion in pay over the next decade even though study after study has shown that federal employees actually earn less than their private sector counterparts when factors such as skill and education level are taken into account.

H.R. 273 is not a serious attempt to address the budget deficit. The \$15 billion it would raise represents barely a fraction of projected deficits over the next decade. True deficit reduction will need to be balanced and sacrifice will need to be shared.

H.R. 273 is also shortsighted policy.

The federal government should not be an employer of last resort. Our citizens depend on our ability to recruit the most qualified individuals to treat our wounded veterans, inspect our food, oversee nuclear power plants, protect us from terrorism, and provide a broad range of other critical services. H.R. 273 is yet another attempt by the Republican Majority to find a scapegoat for the deficit that shields the wealthiest individuals and corporations from making any kind of contribution. While this legislation would do virtually nothing to improve our budget outlook, it would force more economic harm on our dedicated federal

workers and have a devastating long-term effect on the quality of government services and operations.

I urge my colleagues to vote against this legislation.